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Chairperson: Mr. Torrington (Vice-Chairperson) ..... (Guyana)

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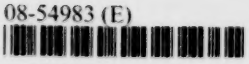

In the absence of Ms. Ogwu (Nigeria), Mr. Torrington (Guyana), Vice-Chairperson, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Agenda item 54: Operational activities for development (A/63/71-E/2008/46 and A/63/85-E/2008/83; A/63/201, 205 and 207)

1. **Mr. Stelzer** (Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Inter-Agency Affairs), introducing the Secretary-General's reports on the comprehensive statistical analysis of the financing of operational activities for development of the United Nations for 2006 (A/63/71-E/2008/46), on trends in contributions to operational activities for development of the United Nations and measures to promote an adequate, predictable and expanding base of United Nations development assistance (A/63/201) and on the implications of aligning the strategic planning cycle of the United Nations funds and programmes with the comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development (A/63/207), said that, on the conclusion of the triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system, the General Assembly had adopted resolution 62/208, setting out the modalities of development cooperation for the next three years. Over the following months, however, there had been a number of unexpected developments: first, the energy and food crises and then, the current financial turmoil.

2. The High-level Event on the Millennium Development Goals had given cause for optimism: it had shown that there was still much goodwill among Member States and civil society to undertake new commitments to achieve the Goals. The recent Accra High-level Forum on Aid Effectiveness had generated fresh commitments to the reform of development cooperation, as shown by the focus on national ownership and leadership, capacity development and greater accountability. He hoped that the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus (the Doha Review Conference) would be seized as an opportunity to adopt decisive measures on mobilizing finance and launching the systemic changes needed to bolster development. Indeed, the United Nations development system as a whole needed improved strategies and development cooperation. The system was currently helping Governments cope with the impact of the current crises and maintain a focus on long-term development goals.

3. The first two of the reports that he was introducing related to the financing of the United Nations system, which was under threat in the current environment. The third dealt with the need to ensure that the provisions of the comprehensive policy review translated into the effective operation of funds and programmes.

4. The first two reports were complementary: one consolidated the financial data on contributions and expenditure by 37 United Nations entities, while the other provided an analysis of the factors behind the trend in contributions and reported on measures to improve the financing of the system's development assistance. The total value of contributions received by the system for operational activities in 2006 had amounted to US$ 17.2 billion. Although that was 2 per cent less in real terms than the contributions received in 2005, it should be noted that the latter had been an exceptional year, owing to the occurrence of two humanitarian disasters, the Asian tsunami and the South Asia earthquake. Meanwhile, expenditure by the system had amounted to $16.4 billion on operational activities in 2006, a 2.2 per cent increase in real terms over 2005.

5. The report analysed the expenditure flows by entity, by funding and by country of expenditure. For the first time, it also contained a detailed analysis of the financing of operational activities for development by the specialized agencies. The persistent imbalance between core and non-core contributions gave rise to concern, with core contributions in 2006 accounting for only about 30 per cent of total contributions. Core funding that was not earmarked was fundamental to the system's ability to respond flexibly to changing country needs and priorities.

6. The report also set out a strategy for building a comprehensive, sustainable and consistent financial data and reporting system for operational activities for development and provided information on progress to date and planned activities. The Economic and Social Council had, at its most recent session, encouraged the Secretary-General to proceed with its work. As requested in General Assembly resolution 62/208, paragraph 29, the Secretary-General had taken practical steps to improve the quantity and quality of funding for United Nations development assistance.

The convening of the High-level Event on the Millennium Development Goals had shown the Secretary-General's determination to mobilize resources and political will. Moreover, before the Group of Eight (G-8) Summit in Hokkaido, Japan, the Secretary-General had sent a letter appealing to the eight countries to intensify their efforts to increase official development assistance (ODA). He had also requested his Special Adviser on Innovative Financing for Development to take on the additional task of mobilizing the political will to provide increased and more predictable funding for the United Nations system.

7. The Secretary-General was considering launching a good multilateral donorship initiative, in the light of the outcomes of the Accra High-level Forum on Aid Effectiveness and the Doha Review Conference. Such an initiative could be used as a platform for sharing best donor practices, increasing mutual accountability and providing guidelines for donors on the provision of effective multilateral aid. The progress of the initiative could be reviewed in the context of the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council, particularly the biennial Development Cooperation Forum. He invited Member States to express their views.

8. The Chief Executives Board for Coordination had also been working to achieve greater coherence, coordination, simplification and harmonization. Through the Board, the Secretary-General would encourage United Nations bodies to move from ad hoc and fragmented extrabudgetary funding to the comprehensive programming of resource mobilization. In order to address the imbalance between core and non-core resources, common results-based planning, monitoring and reporting systems were being introduced. The multi-year funding frameworks and thematic funding arrangements had proved to be effective in monitoring the use and predictability of financial resources. The Secretary-General would also encourage United Nations bodies to adopt procedures such as the indicative scale of voluntary contributions applied by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) or the replenishment-type negotiations used by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). Partnerships with the private sector could help leverage previous resources.

9. Overall, the funding of United Nations development cooperation should be addressed as an integral part of efforts to maximize support to developing countries. There must be a strong political will to equip the United Nations system to support countries in their implementation of commitments. He counted on the Committee to provide further political guidance on strengthening the development system and putting it on a sound financial footing.

10. The third report that he was introducing (A/63/207) dealt with the issue of ensuring that strategic plans were anchored in the guidance given by member States, with particular reference to the four major funds and programmes — the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Food Programme (WFP) — which together accounted for about 60 per cent of country-level expenditure on operational activities for development. The triennial nature of the comprehensive policy review meant that the four-year strategic plans of funds and programmes could not benefit from the guidance of the latest review, since they were either prepared long before the review or already in the course of implementation. Shifting to a quadrennial cycle for the comprehensive policy review would offer a number of advantages, besides enabling better synchronization with the four-year planning cycles of funds and programmes. In particular, it would allow a more realistic time frame for implementing measures.

11. The report identified two options on the timing of a changeover to a quadrennial cycle. The first was to hold the next comprehensive policy review in 2010, as planned, and the subsequent one in 2014. The second was for the next review to take place in 2011. The report analysed the implications of both options, in terms of the adjustments that should be made to the funds' and programmes' current planning and biennial budget cycles.

12. **Ms. Alberdi** (Executive Director of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)), introducing the report on UNIFEM activities transmitted by the Secretary-General (A/63/205), said that the Fund remained focused on the dual mandate set out in General Assembly resolution 39/125 which remained as relevant as it had been in 1984. It carried out its work in accordance with four-year plans approved by the UNDP-UNFPA Executive Board. The

report highlighted progress on each of the four outcomes contained in the multi-year funding framework 2004-2007, including the partnerships and strategies that UNIFEM employed to assist countries in formulating and implementing laws and policies to promote gender equality and women's human rights, building institutional capacity to allocate resources and establish accountability mechanisms to ensure implementation, strengthening the capacity of gender-equality advocates to influence and participate in mainstream development policymaking and programming and ending harmful practices and attitudes that perpetuated gender inequality worldwide.

13. The report built on previous reports but also took into account the commitments to gender equality and women's empowerment contained in the triennial comprehensive policy review, discussions on financing for development and gender equality within the Commission on the Status of Women at its fifty-seventh session, the Economic and Social Council Development Cooperation Forum in June and July 2008 and the High-level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in August and September. It also built on the findings of the biennial publication by UNIFEM, entitled *Progress of the World's Women 2008-09: Who Answers to Women?* The publication had been launched just before the High-level Event on the Millennium Development Goals in order to draw attention to challenges that needed urgent attention: women were outnumbered four to one in legislatures around the world; over 60 per cent of all unpaid family workers globally were women; in sub-Saharan Africa, three women were infected with HIV for every two men; and, in some parts of the world, 1 in 10 women died from pregnancy-related causes, even though the means of preventing maternal mortality were cost-effective and well known.

14. In 2008, the Task Team on Gender Equality, chaired by UNIFEM and including representation from 17 United Nations entities, had finalized its work on a first round of field-testing of indicators that United Nations country teams could use. The indicators had been distributed to all resident coordinators by the UNDP Administrator, encouraging country teams to use them as a baseline against which to measure changes in performance on gender inequality. The United Nations Development Group (UNDG) would be monitoring and supporting country teams' efforts to use the tool — often in combination with the gender audit methodology developed by the International Labour Organization (ILO) — and to undertake analysis of the achievements and difficulties that they encountered in their efforts to respond to national-level demand for gender equality support.

15. The Task Team had also continued to analyse the annual reports of resident coordinators to track changes in the types of national-level activities that the country teams were supporting. Over the past four years, trends had been positive overall. The number of joint initiatives on gender equality had doubled since 2004, initiatives to end violence against women had nearly tripled and capacity development support for national women's machineries had gone up over fourfold. Although reporting by resident coordinators on specific initiatives had increased, however, important gaps remained. There was, for example, no system-wide approach to tracking the resources that United Nations organizations invested in gender equality and women's empowerment. As a result, there had been too little progress in achieving all the Millennium Development Goals, especially that relating to gender equality and women's empowerment.

16. Regional initiatives had included the Fund's ongoing chairing of the Gender and Human Rights Advisory Group of the Regional Directors' Team in southern Africa and its work, in cooperation with UNFPA, to engage young men, and address sexual violence against young women, in Latin America and the Caribbean. In the Asia-Pacific region, UNIFEM and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) had brought together 23 regional offices under the Regional Coordination Mechanism's Thematic Working Group on Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality to review gender-based threats to attaining the Millennium Development Goals in the region. To ensure that regional coordination mechanisms intensified their efforts in support of gender equality, UNIFEM was working with the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) to implement their gender policy framework; with the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) to develop standardized indicators for a regional gender database; and with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to develop a gender-sensitive human rights instrument on migration.

17. At the country level, UNIFEM had strengthened its partnerships with Governments, civil society and multilateral agencies on gender equality financing at

the country level. Such partnerships were key to amplifying the voices of gender equality advocates in policy processes. Furthermore, UNIFEM had focused on building capacity among gender equality advocates; had brought together Government officials and gender equality advocates from all regions in the run-up to the Third High-level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, held in Ghana in September; a id had forged partnerships and built capacities with a view to mainstreaming gender-responsive budgeting in key ministries.

18. Priority issues in the follow-up to the High-level Forum included ensuring that gender-responsive budgeting was an integral part of public financial management reform; securing country-level agreement on a set of indicators to monitor the impact of aid and domestic resource mobilization on gender equality and women's empowerment; incorporating those indicators into official monitoring and evaluation systems; and adopting innovative funding mechanisms to help gender equality organizations participate in national development planning and reconstruction. She expressed appreciation to the Netherlands, Denmark and Spain for their efforts in that regard and to Governments and private sector donors that had helped bring about the fourfold increase in the resource base of the United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence against Women. The momentum on gender equality generated at the Third High-level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, the High-level Event on the Millennium Development Goals and the High-level Meeting on Africa's Development Needs must be taken into the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development. Gender equality advocates, meanwhile, must secure concrete commitments to scale up support for gender equality priorities. Such efforts were particularly important in light of the current financial crisis.

19. The United Nations system's potential for reducing fragmentation and working in a coordinated manner had increased significantly in recent years, making it easier for countries to access the technical expertise and support for gender equality and women's empowerment that existed within the system. In 2007, UNIFEM had been a partner in over 50 inter-agency initiatives. Today, discussions on how to strengthen United Nations system support in the area of gender equality were focusing on the resources needed to support change on the ground. Coordination and coherence were a means, not an end. They should produce a more effective United Nations at the country level, one that could provide on-demand, high-quality support to countries with a view to accelerating progress on gender equality and women's empowerment.

20. **Mr. Delacroix** (France), speaking on behalf of the European Union; the candidate countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey; the stabilization and association process countries Albania and Montenegro; and, in addition, Armenia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, said that both of the options set out in the Secretary-General's report on the implications of aligning the strategic planning cycles of the United Nations funds and programmes with the comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development (A/63/207) were interesting. Aligning strategic planning cycles with the comprehensive policy review and changing the review from a three-year to a four-year cycle would make it easier for the organizations concerned to incorporate the recommendations of the review into their new strategies would make the United Nations system more coherent and would allow for a midterm review to assess progress in implementing the recommendations of the previous triennial review. Both options would require the planning cycles of UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and WFP to be aligned; consideration might also be given to aligning the planning cycles of the funds associated with UNDP, namely UNIFEM, the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) and the United Nations Volunteer Programme. While both options had their merits, the first option — to proceed with the triennial comprehensive policy review as scheduled in 2010 and shift to a quadrennial comprehensive policy review beginning in 2011 — would require fewer changes to current planning cycles. The European Union looked forward to discussing the two options with a view to adopting a text on the subject during the current session.

21. Turning to the Secretary-General's report on trends in contributions to operational activities for development of the United Nations system and measures to promote an adequate, predictable and expanding base of United Nations development assistance (A/63/201), he said that, even though operational activities for development often suffered owing to the voluntary nature of funding for them, contributions from donors, particularly European donors, had increased considerably. The European

Union had made a commitment to provide more — and more predictable — development assistance.

22. The European Union was open to the idea of defining best practices for multilateral funding, provided the United Nations system continued to improve its strategic planning and evaluation capacity and its accountability. In particular, urgent steps should be taken to establish a comprehensive, sustainable and consistent financial data and reporting system for the operational activities for development of the entire United Nations system.

23. For adequate and predictable resources to be mobilized, the United Nations must provide an accurate assessment of performance and of steps taken to improve performance. Moreover, collaborative approaches to fund-raising must be implemented at all levels; the implementation of innovative mechanisms, such as those developed as part of the "Delivering as One" initiative, was an interesting possibility in that regard. Strategies or partnerships with other actors, such as regional banks or the private sector, would also bring in resources.

24. Turning to the note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report on the activities of UNIFEM (A/63/205), he commended UNIFEM on successfully implementing its multi-year funding framework 2004-2007 and encouraged UNIFEM to continue to be actively involved in the processes leading to a stronger and more coherent United Nations architecture for gender equality and women's empowerment.

25. The High-level Meeting on Africa's Development Needs and the High-level Event on the Millennium Development Goals had stressed the need for international actors to pool their efforts to improve the economic and social situation of developing countries. The implementation of resolution 62/208 on the triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system, which the European Union fully supported, would strengthen the role of the Organization in that regard.

26. He commended UNDG for its efforts to implement the resolution. The management and accountability system of the United Nations development and resident coordinator system was another step forward in strengthening resident coordinators' authority and responsibility on the ground.

27. The United Nations must play its part in implementing the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, whose principles had been further developed at the Third High-level Forum on Aid Effectiveness. The European Union looked forward to seeing the results of the implementation of resolution 62/208 and called on UNDG to present proposals towards the implementation of the Accra Agenda for Action.

28. **Ms. Asmady** (Indonesia), speaking on behalf of ASEAN, said that the current global context lent particular significance to the operational activities for development of the United Nations system. The system must intensify its efforts to address declining ODA and cuts in funding. The development needs of developing countries must be met. In that regard, she called on donor countries to meet the target of providing 0.7 per cent of gross national income (GNI) as ODA. In addition, cooperation within the United Nations system and with donors, the private sector and civil society must be strengthened. Donors must also honour their commitment to increase funding to operational activities, by providing core resources and increasing development assistance overall. Such measures should take account of the national strategies and priorities of developing countries.

29. United Nations mechanisms and funding modalities must be improved as a matter of urgency in order to promote an upward trend in real contributions. At the country level, the Organization must improve aid effectiveness through better quality and delivery, a more effective use of resources, simplified and harmonized operational processes, reduced transaction costs and enhanced national ownership. It must also be given the tools needed to assist countries in attaining the Millennium Development Goals and must measure progress in a concrete and tangible manner. To that end, it must continue to foster reform by promoting leadership, providing clear guidance and enhancing the coherence, effectiveness and efficiency of the United Nations system. She welcomed the initiatives and reforms undertaken in that regard.

30. She welcomed the "Delivering as One" pilot initiative currently under way in eight countries — including Viet Nam, an ASEAN member — and took note of the general findings and recommendations issued following the "Delivering as One" seminar held in Mozambique in May. The pilot initiative was expected to provide essential input to

intergovernmental consultations on the Organization's operational effectiveness. She also took note of the assessment of the progress made by UNIFEM programmes and activities at the country level and looked forward to discussing the related recommendations of the Secretary-General.

31. ASEAN was committed to strengthening cooperation with the United Nations system in order to promote effective operational activities for development. The fact that ASEAN and the United Nations had recently signed a memorandum of understanding demonstrated their mutual commitment to peace and development.

32. **Mr. Olago Owuor** (Kenya), speaking on behalf of the Group of African States, which aligned itself with the statement made by Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, stressed the importance of the operational activities for development of the United Nations system and reiterated the need to adhere to its fundamental principles of universality and neutrality and to its voluntary and grant-based nature. The Secretary-General's continued efforts to build a comprehensive and sustainable financial data and reporting system on United Nations operational activities were welcome. Well-managed operational activities would enable the United Nations system to better serve African countries in their efforts to achieve the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. In that regard, he commended the Secretary-General for his efforts to improve the annual financial report to the operational activities segment of the Economic and Social Council and to harmonize the statistical analysis of the financing of operational activities. He noted with concern that the total value of contributions received by the United Nations system for operational activities had decreased by 2 per cent in real terms in 2006 as compared to 2005 and that the share of core contributions to United Nations funds and programmes had declined in recent years, and reiterated the Group's support for resolution 62/208, which stressed that core resources, because of their untied nature, continued to be the bedrock of the operational activities for development of the United Nations system.

33. He also welcomed the Secretary-General's efforts to promote an adequate, predictable and expanding base of United Nations development assistance. The Group agreed that the level of resources of the organizations had to be commensurate with the mandates and demands placed upon the system and supported the call for donor countries to increase their funding to operational activities, notably through the provision of core resources. It was a matter of concern, however, that the ODA/GNI ratio had fallen from 0.31 per cent in 2006 to 0.28 per cent in 2007. Developed countries that had not yet done so must honour their commitment to provide 0.7 per cent of GNI as ODA to developing countries and 0.15 to 0.20 per cent of GNI as ODA to the least developed countries.

34. Contributions from non-traditional donors had become increasingly important, particularly in view of growing South-South cooperation. Multi-donor funds or pooled resources provided a significant contribution to the provision of additional and predictable resources for development assistance. More needed to be done to strengthen the impact of country-level programmes and ensure that they were based on national priorities.

35. Turning to the Secretary-General's report on the implications of aligning the strategic planning cycles of the United Nations funds and programmes with the comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development (A/63/207), he said that the proposed alignment would enable the United Nations system to deliver development assistance in a more coherent, effective and relevant manner. Consideration should also be given to aligning United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs) with countries' development programme cycles. The two options presented by the Secretary-General and the detailed analysis accompanying them would, he was sure, allow the General Assembly to make a well-informed decision.

36. He noted the work done by UNIFEM in African countries and encouraged it to continue its efforts in that regard.

37. Lastly, he took note of the Statement of Summary of Outcomes and Way Forward adopted at the "Delivering as One" seminar held in Mozambique in May and welcomed the recent adoption of resolution 62/277 on system-wide coherence, reflecting the Assembly's decision to focus its continuing work on system-wide coherence exclusively on "Delivering as One" at the country and regional levels, harmonization of business practices, funding, governance, and gender equality and the empowerment of women.

38. **Mr. Wolfe** (Jamaica), speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that the United Nations was a valuable partner in the provision of development assistance, particularly given the increasingly precarious international environment. The current crises posed significant challenges to CARICOM and other developing countries and underlined the need for increased effectiveness in United Nations operational activities for development. As their effectiveness was largely determined by the financial resources at the Organization's disposal, predictable, stable and long-term funding, particularly core funding, was of crucial importance.

39. Regrettably, total funding of the United Nations system, in real terms, was declining, as was core funding compared to non-core funding. Unearmarked funding should complement the regular budget. With the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus around the corner, he stressed the importance of mobilizing the necessary political will to address the problem of shrinking ODA. In the meantime, he urged Member States, particularly donor countries, to scale up their contributions to core funding.

40. The growing tendency of donors to channel their contributions through bilateral cooperation programmes and multilateral frameworks other than the United Nations undermined the predictability of the Organization's development assistance and limited the extent to which its development system could respond to the priorities of programme countries. The principle of national ownership must be preserved.

41. Development operations should consistently seek to enhance the multilateral character of the United Nations, rather than undermine it, or compromise the Organization's neutrality, impartiality and legitimacy as a partner in the provision of development assistance. He trusted that the Development Cooperation Forum would remain seized with such critical matters over the next few years.

42. The economic classification of CARICOM countries as middle-income countries, on the basis of limited macroeconomic criteria overlooked the stark realities at the microeconomic level. The graduation of some of those countries from United Nations development assistance and from concessionary financing from major lending institutions had only exacerbated the precarious position of CARICOM, which, in fact, continued to need assistance from the international community, especially Haiti.

43. CARICOM attached great importance to the comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development. In switching from a triennial to a quadrennial cycle, Member States should reflect on which option would allow the General Assembly to provide greater guidance to the governing bodies of the funds and programmes, as well as on the implementation of programme activities. Programme support should never be jeopardized.

44. **Ms. Blum** (Colombia) said that effective implementation of General Assembly resolution 62/208 was a priority and, as such, required the full commitment of United Nations programmes, funds and agencies. The decisions on monitoring the implementation of that resolution adopted at the most recent session of the Economic and Social Council were important guidelines in that regard. The monitoring process must promote concrete actions and progress in terms of national ownership, which was crucial to ensuring the effectiveness and sustainability of operational activities. The United Nations system should consistently seek to coordinate its actions with national Governments, particularly in the transition from relief to development.

45. Successful implementation of the triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development and other relevant commitments depended on a stable, broad and predictable resource base. Colombia echoed developing countries' call for a greater balance between core and non-core resources. It also reiterated the importance of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the Accra Agenda for Action in working towards more transparent and results-oriented cooperation.

46. Middle-income countries played a critical role in development but faced challenges arising out of poverty and inequality, making ODA ever more essential. Her delegation expressed its willingness to support initiatives that could translate into concrete support for the development efforts made by middle-income countries.

47. Noting that the United Nations was in a position to promote South-South cooperation, she welcomed the fourth cooperation framework for South-South cooperation adopted by the UNDP Executive Board

and trusted that the General Assembly would endorse implementation of the framework.

48. **Mr. Alimov** (Russian Federation) said that all United Nations organizations and Member States should implement in full the provisions of General Assembly resolution 62/208, which, like previous comprehensive policy reviews, formed the basis for the direction — and the reform — of development activities. Operational activities would be improved only if reforms were coherent and consistent. His delegation supported the proposal to shift the comprehensive policy review from a triennial to a quadrennial cycle so that it would be aligned with the planning cycles of funds and programmes.

49. The Secretary-General's report on trends in contributions to operational activities for development of the United Nations and measures to promote an adequate, predictable and expanding base of United Nations development assistance (A/63/201) gave a fair and objective description of the situation. The trend decline in ODA was, regrettably, being duplicated in the United Nations system itself. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the regional economic commissions, in particular, were woefully underfunded. It was crucially important to enhance the overall potential of United Nations development activities. His delegation trusted that the Fifth Committee's consideration of the Secretary-General's proposals on the topic would lead to the adoption of balanced and pragmatic decisions in that regard. The basic method of supplementing the resources of the operational agencies should, however, remain voluntary and, above all, unearmarked contributions from Member States.

50. South-South cooperation was an important element of the global architecture of development assistance, which was based on well-defined principles, the most important being solidarity. His delegation concurred with developing countries that South-South cooperation was complementary to North-South cooperation and other traditional forms of development assistance. It was a question of growing importance and should be given careful consideration. Organizations of the United Nations system, particularly UNDP, should play a more active role in helping to extend cooperation between developing countries and supporting South-South cooperation. He expressed his delegation's support for a United Nations conference on South-South cooperation.

51. The Secretary-General's report on the activities of UNIFEM gave a fair picture of the outcomes of the multi-year funding framework 2004-2007, which had generally been successful. UNIFEM was an important independent element within the United Nations system that made its own contribution to development in poor countries, including those of Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States. At the same time, the UNIFEM management system included some elements that had no obvious value in the modern world, involving additional expenditure and calling into question the Fund's accountability. Such flaws would, however, disappear with the reform of the United Nations "gender architecture".

52. **Mr. Zainal Abidin** (Malaysia) expressed concern about the recent downward trend in total contributions to United Nations operational activities and in the number of countries contributing, failed efforts to expand the donor base and the persistent imbalance between non-core funding and core funding. The situation was further compounded by an overall decline in resources dedicated to the United Nations development pillar.

53. It was of the utmost importance to determine why the political will to equip the United Nations to support the developing world was lacking, and to address three fundamental questions: whether there was a systemic attempt to weaken the involvement of the United Nations in development and operational activities; whether the multilateral, voluntary, neutral and grant-based nature of the United Nations was perceived as a weakness as the developed world increasingly opted for bilateral channels to provide development assistance; and whether there was an increasing sense of donor fatigue. In the meantime, the Secretary-General should be requested to produce a report that addressed such issues and provided feedback from the developed world, including information on the resources they contributed to the United Nations operational system and to cooperation in general.

54. He expressed concern for the safety of United Nations staff members serving in the field; the tendency to target them directly was particularly alarming. His delegation supported all efforts to strengthen security in the field; however, increased security measures must not lead to increased isolation, which, would only make staff more susceptible to attacks. In addressing the issue of targeted attacks against staff members, Member States must consider

whether the nature of conflict had changed in such a way as to make the United Nations appear as a legitimate target, review the increasingly prevalent integrated missions and their potential role in making humanitarian workers more susceptible to danger, and determine whether or not belligerents still perceived the United Nations to be neutral.

55. **Mr. Charan Sethi** (India) said that the Secretary-General's report on trends in contributions to operational activities for development (A/63/201) and the comprehensive statistical analysis of the financing of operational activities for development of the United Nations system for 2006 (A/63/71) painted a dismal picture. Not only were the great majority of ODA funds disbursed through channels other than the United Nations, but contributions to the United Nations system in 2006 had actually declined in real terms. Without sufficient funding and a broad funding base, the ability of the United Nations system to deliver in a coherent, relevant and effective manner was impaired. Greater political will was required to ensure that the Organization was equipped to deal with the development challenges of the world.

56. When discussing system-wide coherence and related reforms, Member States should use caution: better delivery of development operations should not be hostage to structural objectives, which remained nebulous. Programme content was as important, if not more important, than the pursuit of purely administrative measures. Furthermore, the "Delivering as One" objective must not hamper the ability of recipient countries to determine national priorities.

57. His Government fully supported the objectives of gender empowerment, parity and mainstreaming; however, measures designed to improve the operational capacity of the United Nations in such areas must be adequately funded and monitored by the General Assembly.

58. South-South cooperation, which had taken on increasing importance in recent years, was necessary for mitigating the adverse effects of international economic policies, including the current financial crisis. United Nations development activities should focus more on harnessing the potential of South-South cooperation.

59. **Ms. Zemene** (Ethiopia) said that declining ODA, coupled with decreasing core resources and growing reliance on voluntary, extrabudgetary and earmarked contributions for the funding of United Nations operational activities, was a source of great concern for the poorest countries. Current trends exacerbated unpredictability and unreliability of resources. Multi-year funding frameworks had not significantly improved predictability of funding and donors did not pay on schedule. Strong political will was crucial to enable the Organization to support countries in implementing international commitments.

60. Broadening the donor base was important for enhancing the long-term financial sustainability of United Nations operational activities. She supported the call for donor countries to increase their contributions to such activities, especially through the provision of core resources.

61. The primary responsibility for development lay with individual countries through national ownership and leadership of country-based programmes. The effective implementation of the triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development was therefore of paramount importance. The activities of the United Nations system should be carried out in such a way as to avoid parallel structures and to promote implementation and evaluation under the umbrella of a single common United Nations framework.

62. Aligning the strategic planning cycles of the United Nations funds and programmes with the comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development (A/63/207) contributed to enhancing the coherence, effectiveness and relevance of the United Nations system. With regard to the recommendations contained in the report, the General Assembly should be given the support necessary to help it arrive at a well-informed decision.

63. **Mr. Panyapattanakul** (Thailand) said that the United Nations development system and Member States must make concerted efforts to overcome the challenges faced by developing countries to achieve their Millennium Development Goals by 2015. Consequently, the United Nations should play a more proactive role so that, in addition to ensuring greater coherence and coordination in its work, it enhanced its capacity to respond to Member States' needs; it should also strengthen its operational activities in order to make development assistance at all levels more effective and timely.

64. System-wide coherence, particularly between the country and the regional level, was also important to ensure that the development assistance provided by the United Nations agencies was responsive to country needs. The "Delivering as One" pilot programme was an excellent mechanism in that regard. Furthermore, the regional commissions should carry out their mandates in coordination with the United Nations country teams. The Commissions could also serve as hubs for countries to learn from one another and exchange views on policy options, strategies and good practices.

65. South-South cooperation could play a complementary role to the traditional North-South cooperation by establishing trilateral North-South-South cooperation to disseminate the advanced knowledge and technology of a developed country through the experiences of a developing country.

66. There was great concern that countries would be unable to achieve their Millennium Development Goals by 2015; every effort must be made to ensure that development did not become a casualty of the domestic interests of donor countries and that they honoured their commitment to meet the ODA target of 0.7 per cent of GNI. Lastly, women had a vital role to play in the achievement of the Goals, commencing at the level of the family. In that connection, the work of UNIFEM in empowering women and mainstreaming gender in all the Goals was greatly appreciated.

67. **Mr. Gass** (Switzerland) said that the triennial comprehensive policy review enjoyed broad recognition within important intergovernmental processes and had become a policy framework for the Chief Executives Board; thus, the General Assembly was playing a stronger convening and policy-setting role. Switzerland welcomed the adoption of Economic and Social Council resolution 2008/2 on the management process for the implementation of General Assembly resolution 62/208, which strengthened the complementarity between the General Assembly and the Council with regard to governance of the operational system. In addition, progress had been made on simplification and harmonization under the leadership of the Chief Executives Board, on the harmonization of accountability frameworks by several United Nations agencies, and by the launching of a common post-disaster needs assessment by the United Nations and the World Bank. The initiatives taken by some programme countries to promote greater coherence within the United Nations family at the field level — most recently at the workshop held in Maputo in May — were another positive element.

68. The availability of data on the financing of operational activities was essential for meaningful intergovernmental deliberations on funding. The General Assembly should request that the information on the United Nations system's technical cooperation expenditure, currently produced by UNDP, be included in the comprehensive statistical analysis in order to improve the system's efficiency. A variety of non-core contributions provided an important supplement to regular resources; nevertheless, they were not a substitute for core resources, which should remain the basis for operational activities for development. Increasing core contributions meant that the operational system had to be both efficient and effective and that the reform proposals decided in the triennial comprehensive policy review should result in concrete changes. UNDAFs, strategic plans, results-based management and accountability frameworks had brought a measure of progress. A systematic culture of evaluation would enhance the system's credibility among current and potential donors.

69. To improve the funding of operational activities for development, the United Nations operational system needed to gain political visibility and authority by placing itself at the centre of debates on emerging issues and affirming its values and principles. The United Nations had demonstrated some weaknesses in that regard; for example, although the debate on climate change had been initiated under its aegis, the Organization was now somewhat marginalized from operational and financial initiatives, despite current international interest in the issue. Quite apart from the United Nations ability to position itself, there was the question of whether its operational system could become the leading force in emerging issues. Its fragmented nature meant that it had more difficulty speaking with one voice and positioning itself than a compact integrated institution with high-quality technical and scientific expertise, under a single administration and in a sound financial situation.

70. Multilateral funding decisions were susceptible to peer pressure among donors. Consequently, Switzerland welcomed the Secretary-General's proposal to launch a good multilateral donor initiative aimed at improving the quality and quantity of

financial contributions to the United Nations development system.

71. With regard to the options for aligning the strategic planning cycles of the United Nations funds and programmes with the comprehensive policy review, Switzerland preferred to extend the duration of the current cycle and carry out a quadrennial review in 2011, thus providing the operational system and Member States with more time to focus on implementing the policy guidelines provided by the General Assembly and the Executive Boards. Evidently, several funds and programmes would have to extend the duration of their current strategic plans; however, that would give the agencies and staff in the field more time to respond to the needs and challenges of poverty reduction rather than focusing on the next strategic planning exercise. It would also allow more time to build on lessons learned and increase the relevance of the 2009 midterm review exercise.

72. **Mr. Chidumo** (Mozambique) expressed concern about the decrease in the total value of contributions to the United Nations system in recent years. Moreover, the perception of developed countries with their own economies in the current financial turmoil could result in a drastic reduction of ODA and jeopardize efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. The developed countries were therefore urged to achieve the target of 0.7 per cent of GNI for ODA, and 0.15 to 0.2 per cent for the least developed countries. The increase in ODA should address the growing imbalance between core and non-core resources and increase the resources available for United Nations operational activities for development.

73. The initiatives of the Secretary-General, with the support of some donor countries, to bring additional, predictable financial resources into the United Nations system were to be commended and should be continued and expanded. The creation of the MDG Achievement Fund by Spain in 2006 to channel substantial financial resources through UNDP to support the achievement of the Goals in countries such as Mozambique was another laudable initiative and other donors should consider joining it.

74. Mozambique was fully committed to the reform of the United Nations system to ensure it played an effective role in supporting national efforts to achieve poverty reduction objectives. The "One UN" approach was providing a framework to ensure coherence with national development programmes and priorities; nevertheless, while positive results had been achieved as regards national ownership and Government leadership of the partnership with the United Nations system at country level, the funding gap remained a major challenge.

75. The General Assembly was tackling the issue of system-wide coherence and Mozambique welcomed the Secretary-General's recommendations on aligning the strategic planning cycles of the United Nations funds and programmes with the triennial comprehensive policy review. However, it shared the African Group view that the process should take into account the need to align the development assistance frameworks with the development programme cycles of the countries concerned.

76. **Mr. Mishkorudny** (Belarus) said that, at a time of global financial instability, the development activities of the United Nations assumed even greater importance. At its substantive session in July 2008, the Economic and Social Council had therefore assessed the progress made in implementing General Assembly resolution 62/208, which set out the conditions for development cooperation, and indicated the priorities that should be pursued.

77. One such priority was cooperation in modernizing energy technology, especially in middle-income countries. In view of the steady decline in energy resources and the growing problems caused by climate change, his delegation hoped that the United Nations would assist programme countries by extending access to alternative energy sources, and that such entities as UNDP and UNFPA would take measures to extend access for programme countries to the most up-to-date energy and other technologies. The debates organized on the initiative of his delegation, among others, during the current session gave States and United Nations entities the opportunity to discuss how the United Nations system should help to lay the groundwork for the introduction of the newest energy efficiency technology.

78. Important though it was to meet the needs of the least developed countries, the middle-income countries should not be neglected. The need to support such countries was set out not only in General Assembly resolution 62/208 but also in the outcome of the Third Ministerial Conference on Development Cooperation, held in Windhoek, Namibia, in August 2008. The

outcome called on UNDP, UNFPA and other United Nations bodies to adopt measures on reviewing the system of resource distribution so that the needs of middle-income countries could be duly taken into account.

79. A number of large middle-income States, including Brazil, China, India, Mexico, the Russian Federation and South Africa, already played an important role in every area of international cooperation and made a positive contribution to stable development in their regions. Many others remained vulnerable, however. Relatively high indicators of per capita income masked the fact that such States could not always resolve problems on their own, with regard to, for example, reconstruction after natural disasters or managing epidemics. The United Nations system should continue to provide timely and adequate assistance in dealing with such problems. Experience showed that stable development in middle-income countries benefited not only the countries themselves but also other programme countries, in that trade and investment links were thereby extended. There had been three international conferences on the problems of middle-income countries. The time had come for the General Assembly to adopt a resolution requiring the United Nations system to take on the role of supporting such countries. A draft resolution to that effect would shortly be submitted to the Committee.

80. **Ms. Navarro** (Cuba) said that the current international situation posed a grave threat to the real possibility of the developing countries implementing their national strategies and plans and complying with the internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs. The funds and programmes urgently required an adequate and predictable level of funding, particularly core resources, so that they could continue their efforts to support the priorities of national governments. The developed countries should not use the financial crisis as an excuse for failing to provide development assistance in the required amount and manner.

81. The problems described in the Secretary-General's report on trends in contributions to operational activities for development of the United Nations system (A/63/201) were worrying. Country-based, demand-driven approaches, rooted in national priorities, should be advocated to quantify funding requirements, rather than donor countries' inclination to finance only their areas of interest. That issue should be taken up at the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development.

82. Cuba was concerned about the divorce between intergovernmental debates and decisions and some of the strategy documents proposed by the Executive Boards of the funds and programmes to guide work in the field; that was particularly true of UNDP. Hence, intergovernmental monitoring of all the agencies of the United Nations system was important to ensure real coherence between their operational and regulatory frameworks. Recent attempts to politicize operational activities, particularly in the work of UNDP, also gave cause for concern. Almost all Member States had rejected this tendency, considering it totally unacceptable; nevertheless, it had increased recently, following reform of the policy on the declassification of previously confidential audit reports of the funds and programmes. Cuba rejected the indiscriminate disclosure of such information which, behind the alleged need for oversight, had hidden political motives based on selectivity and double standards.

83. The Second Committee should also avoid sterile discussions on so-called "system-wide coherence", in order not to prejudice the plenary Assembly's deliberations on the issue. In any case, it was neither viable nor desirable to apply a single formula to all developing countries in the area of operational activities, because that would lead to a loss of flexibility in the field to respond to specific national development needs.

84. **Mr. Al-Hurabi** (Saudi Arabia) said that despite being a developing country itself, his country had provided over $90 billion in grants and concessional loans to developing and least developed countries, which amounted to 4 per cent of its GNP, far exceeding the ODA target. Each developing country should be allowed to achieve development in its own way; it was the developed countries' responsibility to alleviate concerns about the global economic system and eliminate unfair restrictions on market access. The Arab States had made great strides in development over the previous decade, and his country was a major supporter of the development initiatives of the League of Arab States. It was also exerting its influence to ensure global oil market stability for the benefit of both producer and consumer States, and on several previous occasions had maximized its productive capacities to ensure adequate reserves.

85. **Ms. Greenaway** (Antigua and Barbuda), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that, although the Committee had stressed the importance of adequate and predictable funding for the United Nations system and for operational activities in general during previous sessions, there had been no significant improvement and the situation was now compounded by the negative economic outlook.

86. Despite the pledge by G-8 members to increase aid to $130 billion by 2010, it was unlikely that that target would be met. The failure to honour commitments to raise ODA to the requisite levels to achieve the internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs, was disturbing. The Second Committee should ensure that the General Assembly took the necessary actions to avoid failure to reach the Goals.

87. The Group of 77 and China reiterated the call for the United Nations system to play a greater role in helping countries pursue economic and social development according to national plans and priorities. Member States should ensure that the necessary resources were provided on a predictable basis, and donor countries should increase their funding for operational activities. The Group also urged the Secretary-General to increase efforts to augment core contributions, and address the imbalance between core and non-core contributions, because it was extremely important to develop a coherent and coordinated multilateral framework for development assistance. While implementation should favour system-wide actions, however, initiatives should avoid a "one size fits all" approach.

88. The Group of 77 and China was still considering the options set out in the Secretary General's report on the implications of aligning the strategic planning cycles of the United Nations funds and programmes with the comprehensive policy review of operational activities. Any final decision on the best way to lengthen the comprehensive policy review cycle should ensure that the strategic plans of the funds and programmes received policy guidance from the General Assembly.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.